

### Saving Lives at America's Highway-Rail Crossings and along Railroad Rights of Way.

From the State Coordinator *Fred Hirsch*

#### Reaching Teens Can Be A Challenge



My contention has long been that high schoolers are arguably the most difficult age group to sell our message about rail safety, specifically preventing trespassing. Sure, they trespass: taking the shortcut to or from school, trying to catch a little ride, or playing a game of chicken. In scheduling presentations

and safety fairs throughout the year, I don't remember when we last scheduled a high school gathering. After all, teens' knowledge is ubiquitous about the world around them, right? So how could an adult capture their interest and understanding about something as simple as staying off the tracks? That, in part, is why Maine Operation Lifesaver last year stepped up its efforts to meet those high schoolers in a classroom setting as part of their driver education classes. The room rarely has more than 20 students, and more likely a dozen or fewer. The presentation we deliver focuses almost exclusively on safety at railroad crossings as part of teaching good driving habits. Students learn how fast a train can approach a crossing, how difficult it is for a train to stop, and that trains likely approach more quietly. Towards the end of our presentation, Maine Operation Lifesaver volunteers are required to spend a minute or two on rail trespassing. Teens have just learned the facts pertaining to crossing tracks. Now know how those facts can also contribute to tragedy if walking the tracks. We hope they "get it." As you'll note on the back side of our annual report, there is a brief story recognizing driver education schools we have been "adopting." We assign Maine O/L presenters to driving schools. Some schools are more open to our visits than others. Another way we make inroads to driving schools is through free DVDs. Last year, about three dozen of them were given to driver ed teachers at the Maine Driver Education Association annual conference. Some instructors play the DVD without our presentation – and that's OK, too. There are about 120 driving school locations in Maine. We have a ways to go.

#### Maine Vehicle-Train And Trespass Incidents Hold Steady In 2010

Similar to past years, the number of rail-related crashes and trespass casualties remained in the single digits (see graph below) in 2010. Those are certainly enviable figures compared to the dozens of incidents recorded in nearly all other states, but still means Maine needs continued education. Four of the reports were of vehicles hitting trains. Three of those collisions resulted in no injury; one incident resulted in a minor injury. One mishap, ironically involving a person employed in the field of safety, had a bumper ripped off his car because he was parked too close to the tracks. Unfortunately, there was one trespass fatality.

#### Maine O/L Welcomes Large Group Of New Presenters

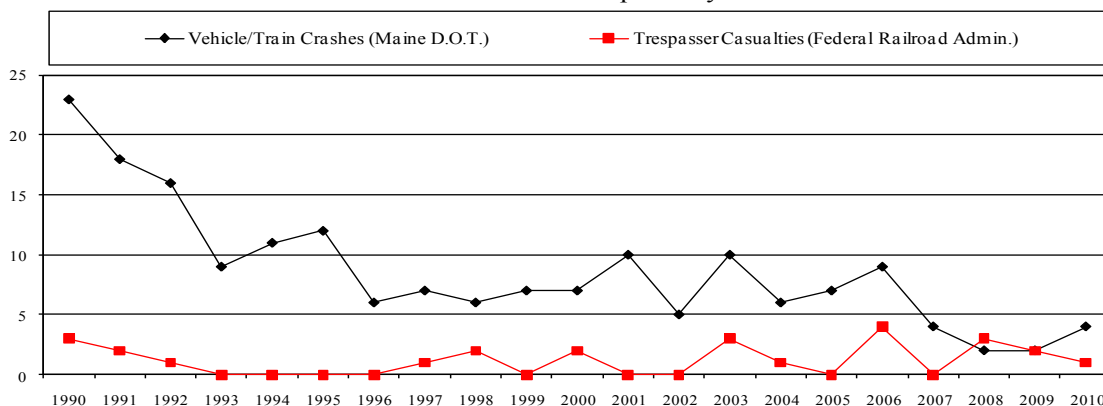
Last year was a good recruitment year as Maine Operation Lifesaver welcomed 12 new presenters and associates to the organization. Two presenter courses were held – one at the St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railroad offices and the other at the Great Falls Model Railroad Club, both in Auburn, during 2010 and led by presenter trainers Norma Griffiths, Bob Davids, and Mike Grizkewitsch. Most of the new presenters are volunteers with the model railroad club. Hailing from Portland and Cape Elizabeth to Bridgton and Greene, they enjoy building several model gauge layouts and serving the community hosting several events during the year. Now, they double as ambassadors of rail safety. Most of last year's graduates have already been certified following their first presentation.



*New presenter Maurice Fortin of Portland delivers his first presentation last fall at the Cathedral School in Portland.*

**For more information, to obtain educational material, or to arrange for a free safety presentation, go to [www.maineol.org](http://www.maineol.org), e-mail at [maineol@roadrunner.com](mailto:maineol@roadrunner.com), call (207) 945-6878, or write to: Maine Operation Lifesaver 69 Thirteenth Street, Bangor, Maine 04401**

Maine Railroad Incidents over the past 20 years



## The Caboose Takes On A New Life

There it is, sleeping away the Maine winter, blanketed in snow. The Maine Operation Lifesaver caboose lives on! The volunteer-built caboose education center spent ten good years on the road visiting dozens and dozens of community events, entertaining and educating tens of thousands of children and their parents while volunteers handed out rail safety coloring books, trading cards, bookmarks, and pencils. The caboose (registered as a camper because officials didn't know how else to categorize it) eventually became more of a liability. Repairs were needed as were drivers and vehicles to haul the 4,800 pound, 19-foot long unit. Maine Operation Lifesaver's Joe Landry of Lewiston, who was instrumental in building the caboose, agreed to take possession and roll it into his backyard to the delight of the neighborhood children. After several years, Joe felt it was time to release the caboose and send it to a new home. The Brooks Preservation Society, operators of the Belfast & Moosehead Railroad, was chosen by our volunteers to become the new owner where it will not only look good amongst railroad equipment, but serve its original purpose again.



## New Trading Cards, New Rail Safety Outreach

One of Maine Operation Lifesaver's most popular giveaways over the past five years have been Maine railroad trading cards. Last year, nearly 30,000 more cards were printed for a third time thanks to our benefactors: the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority and Operation Lifesaver, Inc. The cards feature 14 new pictures of Maine rail scenes, rail safety messages, a description of the rail line pictured, and contact information to receive more information about Maine Operation Lifesaver. Distribution to youngsters will focus on safety education between Portland and Brunswick where Amtrak service will be extended in 2012.



Several of the fourteen new Maine railroad trading cards.

## "Adopting" Driver Ed Schools Statewide

Emphasis during the past year and ongoing is reaching as many new drivers as possible by having our presenters "adopt" driver education schools. Each presenter is assigned a school, or even two, then makes it a point to deliver an Operation Lifesaver presentation during each school's sessions – usually four or five annually, or one presentation every 6-8 weeks. As the numbers show on the graph below, driver ed students reached last year more than doubled. Participating schools so far include: Pace Driving School, Portland, S. Portland; Western Maine Driving School, S. Paris; Ron Fox Driving School, Fairfield; Bair's Driving School, Bangor, Hermon; P&M Driving School, S. China; Northeast Technical Institute, Bangor; Bert's Driving School, Belfast, Pittsfield; TGFTIB Driving School, Brewer; Morse High School, Bath; Deasy School, Wiscasset, Boothbay.

## Maine Convinces National To Highlight Public Works Safety Tips

Equipment lying too close to tracks, snowplow blades hitting rails when crossing tracks, wires being strung over and pipes being laid under rails. These and other public works hazards have been explained to workers over the years here in Maine. Last year, Operation Lifesaver's national office took our cue and is posting similar tips on its website for other states' presenters to pass on to crews which eventually be working around railroad tracks. Maine O/L volunteers Walt Zaccadelli and Norma Griffiths first came up with the idea of reaching out to water and sewer district employees; phone, fiber optic, and cable utility workers; and local, county, and state public works crews of which there are hundreds of thousands nationwide who can be warned of inherent dangers around tracks.

## Those Reached Through O/L Presentations...

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Driver Education Students	132	250	251	314	213	206	534
Professional Drivers	172	84	455	200	66	0	36
Law Enforcement, First Responders	180	202	200	101	123	510	297
School Bus Drivers	58	1213	43	141	277	70	437
Students (preschool - 12)	1161	3970	5102	1038	2376	1487	1236
ATV, Snowmobile, Hunter Safety	0	0	0	0	969	35	706
Civic Groups, others	364	349	567	338	212	231	200
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2067</b>	<b>6068</b>	<b>6618</b>	<b>2132</b>	<b>4236</b>	<b>2539</b>	<b>3446</b>



## Events/Exhibits where Maine Operation Lifesaver participated in 2010

Scarborough Middle School	National Train Day, Bangor, Saco	S. Maine EMS Show, Portland
Maine Driver Education Association, Augusta	Bath Police Safety Day	Auburn Mall
Oakfield Railfan Day	Mattawamkeag 150 <sup>th</sup>	Downeast Scenic Railroad, Ellsworth
Brownville Day	American Folk Festival, Bangor	Oxford County Fair, Norway
Sanford Lions Train Show	Lowe's Safety Day, Brewer	Lincoln Business Show
Seashore Trolley Museum, Kennebunk	Topsham Train Show	Senior Safety Fair, Bangor
New Gloucester Community Fair	Great Falls Model RR Show, Auburn	McLaughlin Garden Foundation, S. Paris
Freeport Fire Rescue Open House	Flagship Cinema, Lewiston	UMaine Volunteer Fair, Orono
Canada-U.S. Border Safety Blitz, New Brunswick	Eastern Maine Model RR Show, Brewer	Maine Health/Safety Conference, Augusta
Great Falls Model RR "Extrainagaznza", Auburn	Brunswick Fire Department Open House	
Medomak Valley HS Car Show, Waldoboro	National Emergency Numbers Association, Lewiston	
Great Falls Model RR Club Open House, Auburn	Maine School Wellness Conference, Carrabasset Valley	